

aio

THE PURITAN MOVEMENT

widely affect . . . , they feather and enlarge
their own
nests, the corporations/"

Such lamentations, the protest of
senatorial dignity
against equestrian upstarts or of the
noblesse against
the *roturier*, were natural in a conservative
aristocracy,

which for a century had felt authority and
prestige
slipping from its grasp, and which could
only main-
tain its hold on them by resigning itself, as
ultimately

it did, to sharing them with its rival. In
return, the

business world, which had its own religious
and political

ideology, steadily gathered the realities of
power into

its own hands ; asked with a sneer, " how
would mer-

chants thrive if gentlemen would not be
unthriftes " ;^{lf}

and vented the indignant contempt felt by an
energetic,

successful and, according to its lights, not
too unscru-

pulous, generation for a class of *faineants*,
unversed in the

new learning of the City and incompetent to
the verge

of immorality in the management of
business affairs.

Their triumphs in the past, their
strength in the

present, their confidence in the future, their
faith in

themselves and their difference from their
feebler

neighbours—a difference as of an iron wedge
in a lump

of clay—made them, to use a modern phrase,
class-

conscious. Like the modern proletarian,
who feels

that, whatever his personal misery and[%] his
present

disappointments, the Cause is rolled forward
to victory

by the irresistible force of an inevitable
evolution, the
Puritan *bourgeoisie* knew that against the
chosen people
the gates of hell could not prevail. The Lord
prospered
their doings.

There is a magic mirror in which each
order and
organ of society, as the consciousness of its
character
and destiny dawns upon it, looks for a
moment, before
the dust of conflict or the glamour of success
obscures its
vision. In that enchanted glass, it sees its
own linea-
ments reflected with ravishing allurements
; for what
it sees is not what it is, but what in the eyes
of mankind
and of its own heart it would be. The
feudal *noblesse*